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FOR AMBASSADORS AND PAOS FROM UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN

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SUBJECT: "THE WAR OF IDEAS" BRIEFING TO THE PRESIDENT
AND VICE PRESIDENT

CLASSIFIED BY: UNDER SECRETARY JAMES K. GLASSMAN FOR
REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

¶1. (C) I want to share with you my recent presentation
to the President and Vice President on the War of Ideas
given at the State Department, October 16, 2008. This
is a somewhat expanded version that takes into account
questions posed during the briefing. I hope you will
find it useful as you plan your Mission's objectives and
priorities. I welcome any thoughts or suggestions you
or anyone at your Mission might have. Thank you, James
¶K. Glassman

BEGIN TEXT

¶2. (C) Introduction

I want to talk today about the revival of the war of
ideas. First, some background. Then structure,
strategy, and programs. In public diplomacy, we have
the same objectives as the rest of the U.S. government's
foreign policy and national security actors. The top
goals are to reduce the threats to America and promote
freedom. In public diplomacy, we do that by
understanding, engaging,informing, and influencing
foreign publics. Our tools are words, images, and
deeds. While official diplomacy is aimed mainly at
officials (our Secretary of State talking to their
Foreign Minister), public diplomacy is aimed at publics
(our officials and often our publics engaging with their
publics).

A simple breakdown of public diplomacy puts our work
into three categories: (1) Telling America's story:
explaining our policies and principles to the world.
(2) Engaging in cultural and educational exchanges,
time-tested programs like the Fulbright fellowships.
And (3) Fighting the war of ideas, which is my focus
today. The first category -- telling America's story --
is mainly about us. The second exchanges -- is about
both us and them (foreign audiences). The third -- war
of ideas -- is mainly about them.

Over the past four months, we have shifted our focus and
emphasis to the war of ideas. But we are NOT neglecting
the first two categories traditional public diplomacy.
This is where we spend most of our money, by far.
Exchanges are our crown jewels, and they have increased
significantly under this administration and have helped
us boost U.S. respect and trust abroad.

In 2006, the President designated the Under Secretary to
lead the interagency -- primarily State, USAID, Defense,
and the intelligence community -- in the war of ideas.
And that has been my focus. In the war of ideas, our
core task is NOT to fix foreigners' perceptions of the
United States, but to isolate and reduce the threat of
violent extremism -- not with bombs and bullets but with
words, images, and deeds. As I said, it is about them,
not us.

We were good at the war of ideas during the Cold War,
but after the Berlin Wall was dismantled, the war of

ideas was also dismantled, as was public diplomacy in
general in bipartisan fashion over the 1990s. For
example, USIA was merged out of existence, the number of
public diplomacy officers fell, Radio Free Europe was
cut back, funding for ideological engagement dried up.

When George W. Bush became president, there was no
focused war of ideas strategy to speak of, and no
infrastructure. Today, as this administration prepares
to leave office, a strategy, a platform, and a new way
of doing business are in place, ready for the next
administration.

3 (C) Briefly on the structure

We have reorganized. State has the lead and chairs the
PCC (Policy Coordinating Committee) on Strategic
Communications, with a National Security Council
representative as vice chair. The PCC reports up to a
Deputies' Committee and then to a Principals' Committee
with the President at the top.

The Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC), a new
interagency group with people from State, Defense, and
the intelligence community, is our day-to-day strategy
and operations center. The National Counter Terrorism
Center (NCTC) plays a key role in analysis and support.
We have a new apparatus to deconflict and help
coordinate programs across government.

Everyone on our team knows the mission. It is to create
a global environment hostile to violent extremism. We
do that in two ways: First, we confront and undermine
the ideology that justifies and spurs the violence.
Second, we divert young people from the path that leads
them to violent extremism. We cut off the flow of
recruits.

¶4. (C) How do we do this?

We have an example in our efforts with Pakistan.
Recently, we completed a new war of ideas plan for
Pakistan. It was done in a short time and is the work
of an interagency team. Our main objective in this
effort is to get the whole population of Pakistan,
including the tribal areas, to see the war on terror as
their struggle. To understand that the Taliban and Al
Qaeda are an existential threat. Surveys show that many
Pakistanis do not recognize the threat.

Changing that perception is not something that we can
do, but we can help empower Pakistanis to tell their
story and lead. For example, thanks in part to our
support, within a week and a half after the Marriott
bombing, for example, Pakistanis were placing ads in
major newspapers with the message, This is Our War.
Pakistan's war. There are many other ways we can and
are helping. One is the first project to help reform
madrassas to teach critical thinking and universal
values such as tolerance.

¶5. (C) War of Ideas is global

This work in Pakistan shows what we are doing in one
country. The war of ideas, of course, is global, and
technology can empower global networks that promote
freedom, democracy, and anti-violence activity. Yes,
our enemies can use technology as well. Al Qaeda uses
the Internet to indoctrinate and teach violent
techniques, and young people can play Hizbollah video
games built on fantasies of killing Americans. But, in
general, violent extremist groups cannot adapt their
approach to the new Web 2.0 social-networking technology
sweeping the Internet and that stresses democratic
interaction. Al Qaeda does not want to expose its ideas
to critcism.

We are latching onto the latest U.S. privately developed
technology -- Facebook and Google, for example --
against the violent extremists. Our belief is that the
private sector understands how to use this technology to
connect with millions of people far better than we in
government understand it. We are hitching a ride on
their fast-moving train.

Consider Colombia. A small group of young Colombians,
without government assistance, used Facebook to build a
movement that put 12 million people around the world
into the streets on February 4 in demonstrations against
the FARC, a vicious violent extremist group that has
terrorized that country for more than 40 years. The
movement helped accelerate desertions from the FARC.
Those demobilizations, as they are called, will exceed
3,000 this year.

We are acting as a facilitator to speed the use of the
same techniques again, employed by private citizens, not
governments, to build movements against violence in
other Latin American nations, in Afghanistan and
Pakistan, the Mideast, Europe and elsewhere.

Globally, we have dozens of such projects, and we use
the State Department's greatest asset: our network of
embassies and consulates and our power to convene to
develop an understanding of what is wanted and needed on
the ground.

We are creating a global network that connects women
opposed to violence, organized on the MADD, or Mothers
Against Drunk Driving model, in the United States. This
network encourages women -- many of whose families and
neighbors have been victims of violence -- to stand up
and oppose violence in their own communities. Women are
agents for change.

We are backing the Project for the Future of the Middle
East, which is convening the best minds to launch a
mainstream think tank in the Mideast region. We're
funding a program to promote radio call-in shows in
Tanzania and Senegal that feature mainstream imams and
peaceful community leaders. We're helping to build a
community center in Algeria to provide productive after-
school opportunities for youth at risk of traveling down
a path that leads to radicalization and violent
extremism. And we're helping young people understand
the importance of laws to fight terrorism in Kuwait.

A key battleground for the war of ideas is Europe. Some
20 million Muslims live in Western Europe, and we are
engaged in amplifying mainstream Muslim voices to push
back against violent extremism. One example is a
website whose founders had first embraced and then
rejected extremist ideology. In addition, we are
building coalitions of young Muslim technology
entrepreneurs and offering positive alternatives to
Europe's Muslim youth.

Another Europe-centered project is called Problems of
Extremism, an effort backed by State, DoD, and the
private sector. It was inspired by the USIA journal
during the Cold War, "Problems of Communism." In print,
on the web, and in conferences, POE will engage the
ideology of the extremists and articulate global values
of freedom and tolerance. POE is a European, not
American, project because Europe is the man intellectual
battleground, not just for contentious ideas that
involve Islam but the emerging Russian ideology and
ideas of groups that do not, at the present time,
espouse terrorism, but that may present major challenges
in the future.

Many of our traditional public diplomacy programs aid in
and amplify the war of ideas. A good example is English
teaching. In practically every country in the world,
people want to learn English, which they and their

governments associate with upward economic mobility. Even in tough neighborhoods like Yemen, our Access Microscholarship Program is teaching teenagers English after school: 30,000 of them in the past four years. Teaching English does not mean simply imparting words but ideas. It is powerfully subversive.

6 (C) Is the war of ideas working?

Al Qaeda contains the seeds of its own destruction, and, as we saw in Al Anbar Province in Iraq, we can hurry the process along by amplifying the story of its wanton violence against women, children, and fellow Muslims. And the story of its former adherents turning against it.

One dramatic change over the past few years is that favorable opinion toward Usama bin Laden in Muslim nations has plummeted, as has support for suicide bombing. Of course, we can't take all the credit for these declines. These attitudes are the ones we seek to change, along with the behaviors that follow from them. It is more important today in the war of idea that support for the violent extremists falls than that support for the United States rises. (In fact, favorability of the U.S. has risen in 80 percent of the countries in the most recent Pew Global Attitudes survey.)

¶7. (C) Our ultimate goal

Here is our ultimate goal: A world in which the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or social objectives is no longer considered acceptable; efforts to radicalize and recruit new members are no longer successful; and the perpetrators of violent extremism are condemned and isolated.

The difference between 2001 and 2008 is that the structure, the strategy, the programs, and the will to achieve this goal are in place and in operation. For the future, the challenge will be to scale up to meet global threats and opportunities.

Thank you.
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